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SECOND LETTER TO PROFESSOR NOCK ON THE POSITIVE GAINS IN THE SCIENCE OF GREEK RELIGION

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You ask me to list the *positive* gains in the science of Greek and Roman religion during my lifetime. As I was born in 1874 this time covers three-quarters of a century, or if you count from my first publication on Greek religion in 1900, half a century.

Your question is very difficult. It is easier to write a survey of research in my time, such as that to be found in the beginning of each of the volumes of my Geschichte der griechischen Religion, although such a survey must imply a large subjective element, a judgment of values. To answer your question with regard to positive gains, gains which will persist throughout the changing years, — in Saecula Saeculorum —, is indeed beyond human power, for no human being can make such a forecast.

I shall begin with the comparison of Greek religion to the religions of primitive peoples and to popular customs and beliefs, for the study of these analogies was of paramount importance in the decades when my study of Greek religion began.

Greek religion is in its beginning intimately linked up with primitive religion and these links persisted, at least there are traces of them even in the classical age; but Greek religion is the religion not of a primitive people, but of a people with a very highly developed and glorious culture. Those who have searched eagerly for primitive ideas in Greek religion often seem to have forgotten the latter truth, which has indeed become a truism. That is so even in regard to popular customs and beliefs. Similarities and analogies are undeniable. Apart from the objections made above, a comparison of the religion of the Greeks with those of primitive peoples and with primitive customs and beliefs enlarges our understanding of Greek religion, in general, but only in general, for it is a mistake to think that such a comparison can

help to reconstruct phenomena in Greek religion in detail, as at times has been attempted. The positive gain is not to be found in the various hypotheses and the attempted solutions of the problems envisaged but in the putting of the question and the expanding of our horizon.

This intimate relation of Greek religion to primitive religions and to rustic customs and beliefs is a great gain and at the same time a great problem for the study of religion in general. Greek religion, if it does not begin in primitive religious ideas and rites, has its roots therein — reaching up with the works of Plato and other philosophies and ideas which came to the fore in late antiquity, to the highest religious spheres. Greek religion was never systematized, nor subjected to a thoroughgoing reform until the age of the Neoplatonists. Other philosophical schools had no great importance for religious life; they prepared building materials but did not create from them a structure of living religion. To realize the importance of this fact let us glance at the religions of the Near East known to us through a multitude of texts. All these texts were composed and written by priests. They are an outcome of priestly wisdom, of priestly expounding and systematizing of ritual and beliefs. Look at Egypt or at Babylonia or Persia. What do we know of the beliefs, the ideas, and the customs current among the people? They are hidden from our eyes by the iron curtain of priestly wisdom, through which we can but dimly perceive a little, a very little, such as animal cult and magical practices in Egypt, and the daemons and incantations popular in Babylonia. Greek religion was never elaborated nor systematized by priestly wisdom; until the age of syncretism it had no holy books, no ritual texts, unless you count the Orphic writings as such, but they were restricted to narrow circles. To realize this fact is a positive gain.

I return to the relation of Greek religion to primitive religion. The general ideas and theories advanced from time to time and prevailing successively in our views of primitive religion have been the foundations upon which scholars built when grappling with the problems of the beginnings of Greek religion and trying to apprehend them. These attempts were the children of their age, bore its marks, and were full of errors.

I sing no dirge over the bier of natural mythology, for in that case I should have to sing dirges over other theories too, such as totemism, and, as Thetis over Achilles, I should have to wail over the living too. Greek religion supplies only extremely few examples on forced interpretations which can be used to illustrate the belief in the universal High God or the "ritual-mythical pattern." Theories which once upon a time ruled and dominated, have been subject to criticism, have been supplanted by others, have faded into insignificance and been reduced to their proper proportions. Nobody can deny the part played by spirits, power, magic, taboo. They too are undeniable ingredients in the religion of the Greeks and of other people. The mistake was that the importance of the factors was overemphasized, and they were thought to unlock all doors and to solve all problems.

The statement of general laws depends on induction and the value of the induction depends on the greater or lesser completeness of the materials. As regards the religions of primitive peoples the materials are on one hand extremely numerous, on the other insufficient. What in anthropological research would seem to be an induction is something much less. It is the taking as proofs of examples illustrating a theory when it would be just as easy to find examples illustrating a diametrically opposite theory. I read long ago two works of anthropological research. In one the savage was pictured as atrocious and ferocious, given to bloodshed, in the other he is peaceful and cowardly and if it comes to blows the combatants disperse at the first sight of blood. Both adduce good examples for their views. The error is of course generalization on the basis of too few, deliberately selected instances, the wish to prove a preconceived theory, the neglect of differences between different peoples, customs, and different ages. From such errors which vitiate many anthropological works Greek religion is, at least in some measure, protected. The materials refer to one people, to definite times, and are numerous. But the above remarks may not be out of place, because there was a time when general theories deduced from anthropology played a great part in research on Greek religion.

There are writings on Greek religion whose authors proceed in a somewhat similar manner searching, as they say, for "the lasting

values of Greek religion." We ought to remember that religious values change from time to time. They were different in the early Christian church than in the Middle Ages, different to Catholics than to Protestants, different to the Greeks of the Classical Age than to the contemporaries of Nonnos and the Emperor Julian.

Another great advantage in the study of Greek religion which too is really a truism is this: we can follow its development and evolution, as far as the texts are concerned, through a millennium from Homer to Proklos. This fact which cannot be denied is a sure gain in respect to the anti-evolutionism which nowadays is preached so confidently and with high-sounding words. Its supporters cannot deny evolution in Greek as well as in some other religions known to us through written documents. Their field is primitive religions, but even these religions are subject to changes, say an evolution in the length of times, although we know them only for a brief space of time. I leave anti-evolution at its value. I have said what it implies elsewhere in the Harvard Theological Review (XLII, 1949, 73 ff.). In Greek religion we are happily not concerned with it.

Up to now I have spoken as much of primitive religion as of Greek religion, because in the beginning of our century research in the latter was closely linked up with theories concerning primitive religion. The gain may seem to be negative rather than positive when exaggerated, or hasty theories have been reduced to their proper proportions. Yet it is a positive gain that our views of Greek religion have been enlarged and enriched, and have become more many-sided and varied.

The same may be said of some out-standing books, dealing especially with Greek religion, Sir Arthur Evans' Tree and Pillar Cult, Usener's Götternamen, Rohde's Psyche, Miss Harrison's Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, not to speak of some less important ones. The theories advanced by these prominent scholars have been reduced to their proper proportions. This is not meant to deny the high value and the stimulating influence of these books, it is simply stating a fact. No one can now subscribe wholesale to their views.

* * *

You ask for the positive gains in our knowledge of Greek re-

ligion. Well, look at the discovery of the Minoan and Mycenaean culture. It has added a millennium to the history of the religions of Greece. The Minoan religion has come down to us as a picture book without a text. When we try to write such an interpretative text a great diversity of opinions ensues. The interpretation may be uncertain and contested, but the monuments and their relation to religion are hard facts. The consequences of this are most important. The Minoans were a non Indo-European people whose culture had attained to full bloom when the Greeks immigrated to the country which was to be theirs. The religion of historical Greece proceeded from a fusion of what was Minoan with Indo-European elements which the Greeks brought with them, perhaps in forms already developed specifically. Opinions may vary and do vary in regard to the important problem of how this fusion came about and just what the proportions of the two different ingredients are. The monuments give no reply. Unfortunately the religion of the immigrating Greeks is much less known than that of the Minoans and it is difficult, almost impossible to discern any appreciable element of it in the religion of the Mycenaean Greeks who were thoroughly Minoized in the exterior aspects of their civilization. It may be that the wholly Minoized representations found on the Mycenaean sites cover very different religious ideas. It is demonstrable that Homer contains elements which have come down from the Mycenaean age. The question arises if this is so even in religion. The problem is there but can only be answered by subjective hypotheses.

The gain is greater when we come to the myths. Certain myths can with some probability be traced down from the Minoan and with still more certainty from the Mycenaean age. The great cycles of heroic myth were, at least for a great part, developed in this age. In detail much is of course uncertain and opinions may vary but the principle is evident. The decisive proof is the close correlation, even in regard to their respective importance, of the centres of the mythological cycles to the centres of Mycenaean civilization. This fact is relevant also for the question of historical elements in the heroic myths, which has been variously judged. We are sure that they exist, although we are unable to discern them with certainty. To this end a control from known

historical facts is needed, such as is possible say for the Nibelungenlied, but in Greece this control is wanting.

We come to the historical age of Greece. I do not think that any book produced during my lifetime will last so long as Lobeck's Aglaophamus, printed in 1829, which is still consulted with profit. It destroyed old phantasies and collected recondite materials. The negative gain of research seems to be more lasting than the positive. It is perhaps understandable because of the bias of scholars to produce new and startling but fragile theories. But look at the increase of the materials at our disposal, texts, inscriptions, and monuments of the arts. Many inscriptions were known earlier, we had the Corpus inscriptionum graecarum, but the increase has been tremendous. I might mention some inscriptions especially important in religious respects: the hymn of Palaikastro whose religious importance far surpasses the many other hymns found, the old-fashioned lex sacra from Cyrene, the more recent, closely regulated sacral laws from Cos, the inscriptions concerning the mysteries at Andania and Lycosura, from the beginning of syncretism the Isis aretalogies, the sacral law of a private cult at Philadelphia, the statutes of the Iobacchoi from Athens. Still more important are the masses of inscriptions from the great sanctuaries: Eleusis, Epidaurus, Delphi, Delos. It is characteristic that Olympia has yielded but little of religious significance. (It was chiefly a place for the Games. In the intervals between the great festivals few people lived there save priests and temple servants, or went there, save sometimes athletes in training. Monuments of victors and champions are numerous but votive offerings are seldom found except in the very earliest layers.) Further there are the inscriptions from various cities of which the most important are Athens, Sparta from the end of the Hellenistic age onwards, Pergamon, Miletus, etc. At Delos the inscriptions give a vivid picture of the mixture of people from various countries and the administration of the temples. The inscriptions teach us the fate of the public cults, their regulation, the attempts at maintaining and restoring them, and their final decline.

The monuments, sculptures, vase paintings, coins, are single pieces, but I may mention here a large group of sculptures and vase paintings pertaining to the Eleusinian cult and myth, which

teach us something of the cults and beliefs on which the mysteries, the secrets of which were jealously guarded, were founded. Monuments teach us also something of the little known house cult and of the small rustic shrines and cave sanctuaries, the objects here found show the piety of simple people. I need not call to mind the great temples in Athens, Epidaurus, Pergamon, and the like. In regard to the Roman age I mention only the monumental work of Cumont on the texts and monuments relating to the mysteries of Mithras and the subsequent discoveries at Dura-Europos.

When I mentioned texts, you may have thought of new texts recently discovered, especially papyri. Of these but a few are relevant for Greek religion, in the Hellenistic age, for example the edict of Ptolemy Philopator enjoining worshipers to submit to him the books of the Dionysiac mysteries; and the badly mutilated fragment of an Orphic text edited by Smyly, whose recent death we all regret. Most of the papyri are later and do not contain much of interest to the student of Greek religion proper.

However, one ought to think not only of new texts but also of known texts the importance of which had been neglected earlier but which now has been recognized. Some of the magic papyri had been edited already in an inadequate manner. In the nineties Dieterich called attention to them, recognizing their value. Since then they have been vigorously studied but more in their relation to magic and foreign religions than in their bearing upon the Greek religion of their age. In 1904 Reitzenstein called attention to the Hermetic tracts which had been much read in the Renaissance but later were almost forgotten. They constitute a most important contribution to the mystic aspect of late paganism and are nowadays duly appreciated. Nock and Festugière have recently published an excellent edition and new texts have appeared in a find of Coptic papyri. Another book of the utmost importance for the latest phase of paganism, Jamblichos, De mysteriis, is unduly neglected because a good edition is wanting; the last one is nearly a hundred years old and not to be had.

The study of syncretism which is of as much importance for late paganism as for early Christianity belongs wholly to the period of which we are speaking. A pioneer work was Hatch's Hibbert lectures on the influence of Greek ideas upon the Chris-

tian church, delivered in 1888. Then, this study was taken up eagerly by classical scholars, first by Usener, later the foremost ones were Cumont and Reitzenstein. Their initiative was very stimulating and far-reaching; they brought forth a mass of texts and passages from various sources, Christian and Oriental writings, but the light thrown upon them was one-sided. One is reminded of what was once said with reference to art: Rome suffocated in the grasp of the Orient. This has proved not to be true and the same is valid of religion. Greek authors and sources must be ransacked not only to find evidence for Oriental influence but also to find evidence for Greek influence, the part which Greek thought and Greek science had in building up the complex structure of syncretism. It is not small but has been unduly put to one side. Some reaction is in process. These critical remarks are not intended to diminish the merits of the great scholars mentioned. They have taken the initiative and they have done a stimulating work which can hardly be too highly appreciated; they have brought forth hitherto unnoticed materials; their work is of fundamental importance, although their theories may be criticized and may prove in part fallacious.

In the last years classical scholars and theologians seem to have parted company to a certain extent. This is to be regretted, for both strive after the same end, a history of syncretism, the preliminaries of the most important revolution of the religions of the peoples of Europe, which led to the victory of Christianity. The synthesis of these studies, which are not so old as the writer of these lines, must needs comprise the paganism of the ancient world, including the Orient, as well as Christianity. These studies are in their infancy; the time is not yet ripe for such a synthesis, it must be left to our descendants. But it is a positive gain of our time to have advanced and seriously to have called attention to this unsurpassingly great problem in the history of Greek, Roman, and European religion.

Some attention has been paid to the non-literary and social aspect of Greek religion which was neglected earlier. Religion is not a complex of beliefs and ideas, cults and practices, separated from other aspects of human life, it is bound to change with historical and social changes; it is subject to the influence of the

separation or the fusion of peoples and classes. Religion may in a simple society be collective, determined by the family and the state in which man is born; if social conditions change these bonds may be slackened and man may choose his religion. One who has a certain belief tends always to associate himself with those who have the same belief for mutual edification and help. They tend to develop certain acts or practices, however simple, special to them, the beginning of a cult. Religion is not only an individualistic but to a very great extent also a social phenomenon.

When you have read these lines you may feel disappointed. You had asked for "an article listing the chief positive gains in our knowledge of Greek and Roman religion in your lifetime." I have not entered upon Roman religion, for the increase of materials for its native form is not considerable and the problems are in suspense; it was early fused with Greek religion and shared its fate. I think you meant research work, and I have found the positive gains in the increase of materials, not in the theories of learned scholars. I really do not underestimate theories and hypotheses; they are stimulating, they are necessary to bring order in and to throw light upon the mass of accumulated materials. They are the steam which drives the engine of research; the materials may be said to be fuel; without fuel no steam. But theories and hypotheses are children of their age; they are commonly one-sided and because of this innate quality frail, subject not only to criticism from other points of view but also to be upset by newly discovered or neglected materials. We need them absolutely and we must take them as they are and be cautious not to hail a new attractive theory as the last word of science. *νᾶφε καὶ μέμνασ' ἀπιστεῖν.* Scholars will have something to say in a coming age also. It has been said that history must be rewritten in every generation to be understandable to the people of that generation. The like is true of the history of religion. Every synthesis, all views depend on the spiritual horizon of the writers and the readers and is conceived and elaborated accordingly.

Finally, even with these restrictions the positive gains in our knowledge of ancient religion in my lifetime are immense.

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THE MAXIM OF ANTIGONUS OF SOCHO

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New York

Antigonus of Socho, who flourished in the first decades of the second century B.C., was ranked among the "Fathers" of the Synagogue by the later Pharisaic teachers, but they had no recollection of his words and deeds. A solitary maxim kept his memory alive and passed his name on to posterity.

I

Antigonus, we are told, used to say: [1] "Be not like slaves who attend upon their masters in expectation to receive *peras* but be like slaves who attend their masters in expectation not to receive *peras*,[2] and let the Fear of Heaven be upon you."

The understanding of this saying depends on the meaning of the word *peras*. Virtually all translators and commentators understand the term as meaning recompense, reward, gift.[3] All these interpretations go back to Maimonides' commentary. Contrasting *šokar* (wages) and *peras*, Maimonides explained the latter term as meaning gratuity, a gift which the master may promise to his wife, child or slave for doing this or that.[4] Living in a slave holding society, Maimonides knew that a sensible master might use such bait to overcome the innate reluctance of a slave to exert

[1] Pirke Abot I, 3. Editions, translations and commentaries of this treatise of the Mishna are indicated in H. L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud (1931), and in M. Mielzner, Introduction to the Talmud (1925). I have used M. Kahn, Pirke Aboth (1875) and Ch. Taylor, Sayings of the Jewish Fathers (1897), II (1900). Both works give the text, with critical notes, translation and commentary. On the treatise Abot cf. L. Finkelstein, JBL, LVII (1938), 13–50 and Id. Introduction to the Treatises Abot and Abot of Rabbi Nathan, N.Y., (1950); (in Hebrew, with Engl. summary).

[2] The variant reading: "not in expectation to receive."

[3] G. Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina II, 155, following Lewy's strange etymology from Greek *phoros*, thinks that the term *peras* here refers to the part of the crops received by the slave-tenant. See also G. F. Moore, Judaism (1927), III, p. 14.

[4] Maimonides ad. l. (Latin translation in G. Surenhusius, Mishna IV, 1702, p. 441).

himself. In Plautus' Casina, Lysidamus promises various gifts to Pardalisca, if she coaxes Casina into good temper.[5]

It is hard to dissent from Maimonides. Yet, his interpretation fails to do justice to Antigonus' saying. What is the merit of a slave who works without hoping for a tip? Being his owner's property, he has to serve willy-nilly. In a Latin play, contemporary with Antigonus, a slave says to his master; "By reason of my servitude, I am bound to exert myself, by hand and foot, day and night, even risking my neck, if only I can be of use to you." Stoic casuists discussed the question whether a slave is able to do a favor to his master, since everything he does for him, he anyhow ought to do. Does the master, says Jesus, thank the slave because he did the things that were commanded to him? [6]

On the other hand, the now common rendering is philologically unfounded. The root *prs* meaning *dividere*, the noun *peras* signifies *pars* and, accordingly, denotes measures which are parts of a greater unity, for instance a half-mina. The term first occurs in an Aramaic inscription (erected in 731 B.C.) with reference to a measure of grain. In the meaning of a measure, the term also appears in Aramaic papyri from Elephantine (fifth century B.C.), in the famous "Writing on the Wall" at Belshazzar's feast (*mane, thecel, pharas*, as Jerome transliterates these words) and often in the Talmud, particularly with reference to bread.[7] Accordingly a prophet says: God asks from you that you "distribute" (*paros*) your bread to the hungry. In Aramaic papyri from Elephantine, people pledge their *prs* which they receive from the government as soldiers (that is their rations) as security.[8]

To a classicist it is now obvious that the term *peras* in Antigonus' saying has the technical meaning of Latin *demensum*, that is the measured allowance, which was given to slaves. In Plautus'

[5] Plaut., Casin. 705. Cf. Plaut., Epid. 725; Stich., 420; Athen. VI, 274 d.

[6] Terent., Andr. 676: *hoc tibi pro servitio debeo, conari manibus pedibus, noctisque et dies, capitis periculum adire dum prosiem tibi.* Sen. de benef. III, 18; Ev., Luc. 17, 9.

[7] Panammu Inscription: G. A. Cooke, A Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions (1903), #62, 6; *prs* is a "half" of the *homer* in Wilbur Papyri (I owe the reference to the future editor, Prof. E. G. Kraeling); Dan., 5, 25. Cf. H. L. Ginsberg, Studies in Daniel (1948), p. 24 and E. G. Kraeling, JBL 63 (1944), 11–18. For Talmudic references see e.g. M. Erub., 8, 2 and other passages quoted in Jacob Levy's Dictionary s.v.

[8] Is., 58.7; A. Cowley, Aramaic Papyri (1923), 2, 16; 11, 6; 45, 8.

Stichus, the master reminds his lazy slaves: "You never forget to claim your rations (*demensum cibum*) the first of every month." [9] Syriac confirms the proposed interpretation.[10] In a parable Jesus speaks of the good steward who deals out the rations (*sitometrion*) to the household in due time. In Syriac Gospel, *sitometrion* is here rendered by *prāsā*.[11]

II

In a patriarchal economy the slave eats with his master. This is the reason why the slave of a priest was qualified to partake of priestly tithes which were forbidden to the Israelite layman.[12] In his Sabine land-house, Horace's slaves shared his meals.[13] But such antique simplicity was a laudable exception in the Hellenistic (and, then, in a Roman) household. In the time of Antigonus of Socho, that is about 200 B.C., the rule was that at fixed intervals slaves received a standard ration. In a sketch of Herodes, a generation before Antigonus of Socho, a *petite bourgeoise*, who has only one servant, scolds this maid: she is like a stone, when called, but counts each crumb when she takes her ration of barley.[14] Likewise, in Roman Palestine, even small people, who had one slave only, ate separately, and the servant took his meal later. It was an exceptional case, remembered by the disciples

[9] Plaut. Stich. 60: *vos meministis quot calendis petere demensum cibum.* Cf. Terent. Phorm. 43: *quod ille unciatim vix de demenso suo suam defraudans genium compersit miser, id illa univorsum abripet.* A similar term was *diurnum*: Sen., Ep. 80, 8; cf. Petron., Sat. 75.

[10] Ev. Luc. 12, 42; C. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum (2nd ed. 1928), p. 600a. (I owe the latter reference to Prof. H. L. Ginsberg.)

[11] Having written this paper, I discovered, not without shame, that M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, etc. p. 1035 (Berlin reprint of 1926) has already suggested the translation "fare (reward)." My sole excuse is that, although his work was published in 1903, no later commentator or translator took up Jastrow's hint. The correct translation has also been given by N. Perepherkovitch in his Russian version of the Mishna (vol. IV, published in 1901). Further, Professor Saul Lieberman informs me that I have a more ancient predecessor. R. Menachem Me' iri (who flourished in Provence in the second half of the 13th c.) in his commentary on Abot gives "daily meal" as the meaning of the term *peras*. Cf. also below n. 1.

[12] Dt., 12,12 and 18. Even a runaway slave of a priest may eat the priestly *terumah* according to M. Gitt. I, 6 (Tos. Gitt. I, 3).

[13] Hor., Sat. II, 6, 65. Cf. Sen., Ep. 47, 2 and 15.

[14] Herodes VI, 5. Cf. Menand., Hero, 31 and already Theopomp. ap. Athen. IV, 31, p. 149 d (FrGrH 115 fr. 215).

of a rabbi, if he gave a part of his own meal to his house-slaves.[15] The system of food allowances was rather general, and reflected in various stories. For instance, R. Eliezer (ca. 300 A.D.) speaks of the slave who, when waiting upon his master, seizes the occasion to ask for *peras*. R. Joshua (II century A.D.) tells the simile of a slave who claims his fare (*parnasah*) only after having attended upon his master to the latter's satisfaction. Another simile refers to the slave who demands his *peras* before the ration is due. The same R. Eliezer tells us incidentally, that the owner gives the fare (*parnasot*) to this slave weekly, to another yearly, and, again, to the third one irregularly, little by little. R. Samuel the Little (ca. 100 A.D.) pictures a slave begging for his *peras*. At last, the owner, losing his patience, orders that his ration be given to him, "so that I may not hear his voice." We also learn that, having received his *peras*, the slave retired backward, bowing, as he went, to his master.[16]

All these passages are from the Roman period; the earliest is the parable of the good steward in Luke. The importance of Antigonus' saying for social history is its date. The maxim shows that the system of food allowances to the slaves already prevailed in the pre-Maccabaic Jerusalem.

III

To the slaves who worked for the sake of their rations, Antigonus opposes the other group of servants. According to the current understanding of the maxim the latter group works without the expectation of a reward. But this explanation is sentimentally anachronistic. There may have been slaves in Jerusalem who, as Seneca says,[17] went beyond and above the limits of servile duties.

[15] Luc. 17, 8. R. Johanan (died 279 A.D.) gave to his slaves a portion of the meat and of the wine which were served to him. (P. Bab. Qamm. 8, p. 6 c; B. Keth. 61 a). In the former passage (quoted S. Rubin, Das talmudische Recht I, 1920, p. 73) it is expressly stated that the rabbi did it not by right but by compassion. On the other hand, it was the duty of the patron to furnish his Hebrew bondman the same kind of food of which he partook. See B. Cohen in Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume, 1945, p. 130.

[16] P. Taan. I, p. 63 c; B. Taan. 19 b; 25b; B. Baba Bathra 25 a. My warmest thanks are due to Professor Boaz Cohen, who here and elsewhere helped me in understanding Talmudic passages.

[17] Sen., de benef. III, 21, 2: *quodque est quod servili officii formulam excedit, quod non ex imperio sed ex voluntate praestatur, beneficium est.*

But Antigonus contrasts one social category with another. He means the slaves who received and the slaves who do not receive the sustenance from the owner. This right interpretation has been already given by R. Samuel Edels (1555–1631).[18] But this interpretation leads to another question: who are these slaves without ration?

In the slave-holding society, the providing of food to "animated tools" takes various forms.[19] Beside the system of rations, two principal types should be noted.[20] First, it may lie with the slave to raise food for his sustenance. "In order to dispense with feeding them himself," the master gives grounds on which to grow provisions to his slaves on which they work in their spare time.[21] That means that there is much more free and productive land than it is possible to cultivate for the advantage of the master. Often used in the New World (Brazil, West Indies), this mode of maintenance was not applicable in the classical world.[22] In another sytem, the slave is hired out (or allowed to hire himself). He receives meals from his temporary employer, mostly lives apart from his master, but, from his earnings, pays a rent to him. This form of bondage was well known in Greece. "There are common slaves who not only nourish themselves, but even pay a rent to their masters." [23] The rabbis also speak of slaves engaged

[18] I owe this reference to Professor Saul Lieberman, who quotes Edels' Novellae to the Aggadoth of the Babylonian Talmud ad 'Ab. Zara 19 a.

[19] Arist. Eth. Nic. 1161 b 4.

[20] There is, so far as I know, no morphological study of the institution of slavery. For this reason, I can give only some instances noted at random.

[21] Boyer-Peyreleau, Les Antilles Françaises I (1823), p. 132: the owner let slaves cultivate their own food, "pour se dispenser tout à fait de les nourrir." Cf. L. Peytraud, L'esclavage aux Antilles Françaises avant 1789 (1897), p. 219; H. Godwin, Lectures on Slavery (Boston, 1836), pp. 41–42; F. W. Putnam, Journ. of Negro History XI (1926), p. 605; F. Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen (1947), p. 61.

[22] So far as I know, in the classical lands the owner only gave the right of pasture on his ground to the live stock of a meritorious slave. Varro, rer. rust. I, 17, 7: *ut peculium aliquid in fundo pascere liceat*. Sometimes the slaves (in a city) received rations plus money (Sen. Ep. 80, 7). For a similar practice in modern slavery cf. W. Sells, Remarks on the Condition of the Slaves in the Island of Jamaica (London, 1823), p. 11.

[23] Teles, ap. Stob. Flor. 95, 21. Cf. e.g. Theophr., Char. 22, 10; Menand., Epit. 162; Alexis, fr. 257 Kock (Ath. IV, 463 f); Plaut., Stich. 550; Vidul. 20. Cf. L. Beauchet, Histoire du droit privé de la république athénienne II (1897), pp. 444–448; W. L. Westermann, Journ. of Near Eastern Stud. V (1946), p. 102. But the vocable *αὐτοσῖτος* does not mean the slave who supports himself but the guest who brings his own food to a banquet. Crobylus, fr. 1 Kock (Ath. VI, 248).

in various business activities (barbers, bakers, etc.).[24] But Antigonus could not have in mind this group, since he speaks of menial servants. Then, the meaning of the maxim requires that the slaves without *peras* must be worse than they on ration.

By the same token, Antigonus does not mean *peculium*. In the first place, the Jewish law has another term (*segullah*) for this institution.[25] Secondly, this institution is of importance only when the owner is interested in the profit he may receive from the work of his slaves. The *peculium* is co-related with industrial and praedial slavery.[26] But Antigonus speaks of household servants who "waited" on the master, and who did not and could not live on their *peculium*, if they had any. Last but not least, in a slave-economy, the slave without a *peculium* is an example not to be imitated, but the one who amasses it by his thrift and industry, is praised. *Peculiosum esse addecet servom et probum*.[27] Were *pras* a kind of *peculium*, the saying of Antigonus would have meant that in the kingdom of God spendthrifts and lazy workers are preferred to a diligent man.

IV

To grasp the meaning of Antigonus' simile, we must realize the fact that the slave is a "permanent hireling" (as the Stoic Chrysippus has defined him) and that the maintenance (as Aristotle has already said) represents the wages of this hireling. Yet, while the employer pays for labor only, the owner has to support his slaves, even when there is no work for them, or when they are unable to work.[28]

[24] S. Krauss, Talmudische Archäologie II (1911), p. 90. Note that these hired out slaves were supplied with meals by their employer. M. Baba Mezia 7, 6. Cf. Is. Mendelsohn, Slavery in the Ancient Near East (1948), pp. 67–70. Modern parallels: Tannenbaum, o.c. (n. 21), pp. 59–61.

[25] On the *peculium* in Jewish law see B. Cohen's forthcoming paper in Proceed. Amer. Acad. for Jewish Research XX (1951).

[26] Cf. generally the admirable paper of Marc Bloch, in Annales, 1947, p. 32. For the Ancient Near East cf. Mendelsohn, o.c., pp. 66–74. P. Rutilius Rufus, cos. 105 B.C., bought fish from fishermen who were his own slaves (Athen. VI, 374 d.).

[27] Plaut. Rud. 112.

[28] Chrysipp., ap. H. v. Arnim, Stoic. Veter. Fragm. III, 354. Cf. Philo, de spec. leg. II, 18, 82. Arist., Oec. I, 5, p. 1334. On modern polemic concerning this alleged advantage of a slave over the free worker see my note Pouchkine, Marx et l'Internationale esclavagiste in La Nouvelle Clio, no. 8, Sept. 1950, pp. 416–431.

The masters, ancient and modern, quite naturally, tried to reduce this unprofitable expenditure. In Terence's Heautontimoroumenos, Menedemus sells all his slaves except those who make up the costs of their sustenance by work on his farm. Roman owners, as two thousand years later the West Indian planters, turned out superannuated or disabled slaves.[29] In ancient and modern slave-holding societies, when the slave was not regularly employed, his food allowance was often shortened or simply withheld. Set adrift, he had to shift as he could in this time. In 1753 a North Carolina law made the owner liable for food, clothing, etc. stolen by his slaves, if they should be in want of provisions.[30] A famous bandit gave this advice to the Romans: "feed your slaves if you don't want to have robbers." In the first century A.D. the *praetor urbis* was empowered to hold in check the greed of owners in respect to the slave maintenance. But already Plato insists that in order to avoid the revolts of slaves, these must be maintained properly. Yet, Hellenistic Stoics debated the question whether a gentleman is morally bound to feed his slaves when food prices are high. Hecaton (ca. 100 B.C.) answered the question negatively.[31]

Jewish slave holders, of course, were no less eager to get rid of unprofitable eaters. A legal rule, already referred to by R. Meir

[29] Ter., Heautontim. 142. On *servi derelicti* cf. Suet., Claud. 25; Dig. XL, 8, 2; Cod. Just. VI, 1, 3; I Sam. 30, 13; Plut., Cato mai. 5, 2; Cato, de agr. 2. Cf. W. O. Blake, The History of Slavery (1857), p. 155 (West Indies). Plato, Leg. VIII, 848 a–b shows that a third of production by an agricultural slave had to be set apart for his feeding. The proportion was the same on sugar plantations of Barbados in 1788. See Putnam (n. 21), p. 624 and cf. E. Q. Hawk, Economic History of the South (1934), p. 88 and p. 257.

[30] J. C. Hurd, The Law of Freedom and Bondage (1862), p. 296, cf. ib. p. 302 and 307 (laws of South Carolina of 1735 and 1740). Prof. W. L. Westermann kindly referred me to this collection. Other modern parallels: J. M'Queen, The British Colonies in Blackwood's Edinborough Magazine XXV (1829), p. 652; T. H. Barber, Account of the Slave Population in the Western Peninsula of India (Lond. 1833), pp. 14–15; Putnam (n. 21), p. 606 and 624. As late as 1831 an Order in Council dealt with the problem of slave sustenance. R. L. Schuyler, Parliament and the British Empire (1929) p. 171.

[31] Dio Cass. LXXVI, 10, 5; Sen., de ben. III, 22, 3: *praetor urbis in praebendis ad victum necessariis avaritiam compescat.* Cf. Ulp., Dig. VII, 1, 15, 1: the legatee *sufficienter autem alere et vestire decet secundum ordinem et dignitatem mancipiorum.* Plato, Leg. VI, 776 b–778 a. Cf. G. R. Morrow, Plato's Law of Slavery (1939), pp. 32–35. The stoic controversy *sit ne boni viri in maxima caritate annonae familiam non alere* is recorded in Cic., de off. III, 23, 89. On the standard maintenance of slaves cf. W. L. Westermann, Cl. Ph. XL (1945), pp. 3–8.

(ca. 150 A.D.) tersely states that the master is permitted not to support his slave. If he sustains a slave (who is useless to him), he does it by favor. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel (ca. 175 A.D.) challenging the doctrine, opined that in a time of drought (and, by consequence, of scarcity) a slave can demand either support or manumission from his owner, but the general verdict of the "Sages" was that the master may do as he pleases. A century later, in the case of a slave maimed by a free man, R. Jonathan rendered the decision that the assailant is liable for damages to the master, but the latter is not held to maintain his mutilated slave. The slave is "to be supported by alms." R. Aha (ca. 320 A.D.) recognized that it will be "the obligation of Israel" to maintain the crippled slave. In other words, the slave-holders succeeded in burdening private benevolence or communal dole with the support of their disabled slaves.[32]

Another legal rule, already formulated in Palestine before 200 A.D. (and often quoted in rabbinic sources), stated that the master may say to his slave: "do work for me, though I will not support thee." According to a later interpretation, if the master should say to his slave: "work with thy hand for thy alimentation" the slave had to earn his sustenance by himself but his income above the costs of subsistence belong to his owner.[33] But another master could say to his slave: "do work the whole day for me, and in the evening go peddling and eat (from the profit)." The devices of the masters for disregarding the obligation to feed his slaves could vary endlessly.[34]

The essential thing is that such exploitation of slaves violated the moral principle of the slave economy. There is a necessary

[32] M. Gitt. I, 6; P. Gitt. I, 6; B. Gitt. 12 a (R. Simeon). On R. Johanan, etc. see P. Bab. Kamm. 8, 5, p. 6. Text and German translation ap. Rubin (supra n. 15), p. 73, n. 66. On the injury done to another's slave cf. Rubin, ib. p. 50; R. Taubenschlag, The Law of Graeco-Roman Egypt I (1944), pp. 329–335. A related problem was already discussed in Jerusalem before 70 A.D.: whether the owner is bound to maintain the slave whose work he has dedicated to the Temple. See M. Arach. 8, 4; Tos. Arach. 3, 8; B. Gitt. 12 b. The question is essentially the same as whether the owner of the slave apprentice or his master-craftsman has to feed him. Cf. W. L. Westermann, Cl. Ph. XL (1945), pp. 4–5; R. Taubenschlag, in Studi Riccobono I (1936), p. 512. Cf. also Mth. 15, 6.

[33] B. Gitt. 12 a; Bab. Mez. 93 a; Bab. Qamm. 87 b; Keth. 43 a and 58 b.

[34] B. Bab. Qamm. 87 a. Cf. for instance the opinion, already discussed in Hillel's School that the slave of two owners, if manumitted by one of them, is required to work three days weekly for the other master. (M. Gitt. 4, 5.)

correlation between the master's absolute right over the slave and his duty of taking care of him. Aristotle says (and Ben Sira repeats) that the slave needs these three: work, punishment, food. The philosopher adds: "to give him work and punishment without food, would be oppressive and exhaust him." We read in Ecclesiasticus that the slave who disobeys his master "angers him who nourishes him." The cause of the great slave revolt in Sicily was that the greedy owners had disrupted the traditional system of slave maintenance.[35]

Security is the sole compensation of slavehood. Epictetus pictures the manumitted slave who always prayed to be set free. But now having to earn his living, he regrets the time when "another has kept me clothed, shoed, fed, tended in sickness." As a slave in Plautus, addressing his master, says: *liber si sim meo periculo vivam, nunc vivo tuo.*[36]

Yet, Antigonus says: be like slaves who attend upon their master, without receiving any allowance from him, who are in servitude, but also worn with care for daily bread like free men. What is the meaning of this paradox?

V

Fagius, the first Christian translator of the Sayings of Jewish "Fathers," has already discovered the agreement between Antigonus and the "Christian and apostolic" (read Lutheran) doctrine of justification by faith alone. Jewish authors have ever since paraded Antigonus' sentence as proof that the Jews, too, had sometimes as "pure" religious notions as a German professor of theology.[37]

Maimonides understood the saying as meaning that God should be served from the motive of love. This goes back to R. Eliezer

[35] Arist., Oec. I, 5, p. 1344 b. Cf. Ben Sira 30 (33) 25. Cf. Sen., de ben. III, 21, 2: *Est aliquid quod dominus praestare servo debeat, ut cibaria, ut vestiarium.* Eccles. 19, 21 (the verse is interpolated but the glossator wrote in the Ist. c. B.C. or A.D.). On slave revolt W. L. Westermann (n. 31) p. 8. The Negro slave in Jamaica regarded his allowance as counterpart of his work and considered that the master ought to support him. Alex. Barclay, A Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies (Lond., 1827), p. 52.

[36] Epict. IV, 1, 37; Plaut., Cas. 293. Cf. Theoph., in Comic. Attic. Frag. II, p. 473.

[37] Fagius (1504–49) quoted in Sureshensius (n. 4) ad l. On Jewish and Christian theories of rewards for virtue now see Morton Smith, Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels (1951), pp. 49–71.

(ca. 300 A.D.) who quoted the maxim in stressing the principle that man has to delight in fulfillment of divine commandments. Much earlier is the interpretation (ascribed to the Sadducees) that Antigonus would never have said his word, if he had known that there was another world and a revivification of the dead. Both suggestions disagree with the sense of the terms *peras* and *ebed*, on which the maxim hinges. Antigonus speaks not of reward given to a free man but of food allocation to a slave.[38]

To understand him, we must remember that *ebed* means not only slave, but also subject, worshipper. Yet, homage and worship are again necessarily co-related with the protection given by the master to his servants. "The Lord will hear when I call unto Him" (Ps. 4, 4). But this optimistic principle of harmony between the obedience to the divine Law and prosperity, which for centuries had formed the moral basis of Jewish society, began to be challenged seriously in the time of Antigonus. One of the recurrent topics in Ecclesiastes written by an earlier contemporary of Antigonus is that of theodicy. Doubters denied that man's success or failure correspond to his deserts. Sirach also aimed at vindicating the ways of God with men. He advanced the usual arguments: misfortune may be a blessing in disguise; God will reward right-doing later, and so on. A classicist will remember that at the same time in Athens, Chrysippus labored to vindicate the dispensation of Providence, and was rallied by the Epicureans and other unbelievers.[39]

Antigonus was no Epicurean. He did not doubt the scriptural doctrine, nor disparage men who fulfill the Law for the sake of the promised sustenance. He simply advises us that there is no compensatory harmony between man's obedience and divine favor. The example of a slave-driver and his servants shows that God is not bound to sustain the righteous man because the latter is

[38] Maimonides, ad. l. B. Ab. Zara 19 a. Abot R. Nathan 5, 1. On the latter passage cf. Moore (n. 3) I, 69 and particularly L. Finkelstein, The Pharisees and the Men of the Great Synagogue (1950) pp. xi and 42. Note that in the paraphrase given in Abot free workers are substituted for slaves of Antigonus' maxim and that in Abot as well as in the sermon of R. Eliezer the term *šokar* (wages) is substituted for *peras*.

[39] Kohel. 9, 2. On the book and its date now see H. L. Ginsberg, Studies in Kohelet (1950). For Sirach cf. R. H. Pfeiffer, History of the New Testament Times (1949), pp. 377–378.

anyway his *ebed*. Willy-nilly, you have to serve the Lord even if he, like a heartless owner, refuses you your *peras*, your daily bread. This solution of the awful riddle of life sounds harsh, perhaps, to our delicate ears. Three other ancient apologies may illustrate Antigonus' thought.

The first occurs itself to every reader: the Book of Job, which so eloquently proclaims that such an insignificant being as man cannot contend with the Almighty. The second text is a parable in the Third Gospel. Whatever the slave did for his master, he never received thanks for having performed his task. "So likewise you, when you shall have fulfilled all your tasks, say: We are unworthy slaves, we did that which we had to do." [40] Without speaking of modern commentators, even church fathers were taken aback by the grim impact of this evangelical word. Cyrillus of Alexandria here found a warning against self-praise, Ambrosius a lesson to work all his life in order to obtain a reward in the future life. Hermas, imitating the apologue, followed from it that man must do more than his duty.[41] The plain meaning of the parable is the same as Antigonus' maxim. In both texts God is boldly compared to the unfair slave-driver whose conduct violated the unwritten law of the slave system.

Epictetus, a Phrygian ex-slave himself, joins Antigonus and Jesus. He ridicules the pretension to be free from want. Anyway, God will take care of His "servants." Some one objects: "How so, when He does not provide maintenance." Well, that will be the sign to leave. "I came because it so pleased Him, and I leave, because it so pleases Him, and as long as I live my task is to praise God." [42] Again the same idea: the worshipper is a slave of the Deity, and the divine awfulness is not measurable by man's

[40] Luc. 17, 10: *δοῦλοι ἀχρεῖοί ἐσμεν, ὃ ὠφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν.* Cf. the observation made in a roughly contemporary text about *τοὺς ἀχρείους δούλους* that they take part in every tumult in Alexandria. A. v. Premerstein, Alexandrinische und Jüdische Gesandte Hermes LVII (1922), p. 271. On the character and date of this document now cf. H. I. Bell, Journ. of Juristic Papyrology IV (1950), p. 37. The Syriac palimpsest codex Sinaiticus omits the word "useless" (slaves) in the evangelical parable.

[41] Cyrill., P. G. LXXII, 836; Ambros., Expos. in Luc. VIII, 31; Hermas, Sim. V, 2.

[42] Epict. III. 26, 29 (in my rendering I borrowed some expressions from W. Oldfather's translation in his edition).

standard of fairness. Cruel slave-driver or tender master, God is your owner.

Yet, this doctrine was not of despair, but of hope. The Stoics (and Epictetus among them) fostered the idea of a willing coöperation with the Necessity of the universal order. *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.*[43] The Judaism rather taught the absolute obedience to the divine will. But the submission in Jerusalem as well as in Athens is ultimately based on the confidence in God. Resignation bears promise.

VI

This is the meaning of the last clause of Antigonus' maxim. "And let the Fear of Heaven be with you." Jewish commentators (following Maimonides) understood the admonition as meaning that man should serve God not only from motive of love but also from fear of God. But the casuistic distinction between "loving" and "fearing" God, hotly debated in Jesus' time between the schools of Shammai and of Hillel,[44] was hardly known in the beginning of the second century B.C. In this time, as Ecclesiasticus shows, "fear of God" simply meant "piety," in agreement with the Biblical usage. Of course, *deorum metus* is a necessary foundation of every worship, but the awe of the Almighty no less necessarily includes love and trust in Him. The incommensurability of the Master and the slave here precluded the petty "jealousy of gods" which tormented man in Greece. Therefore, as it is said in Sirach, "you, who fear the Lord, trust in Him, and your reward should not fail." [45]

It is now easy to understand why Antigonus' maxim has been saved from oblivion. It was uttered shortly before or during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. In this time, when there was very great wrath upon Israel, the hope that whoever calls on God is never forsaken could help no more. As Daniel's visions show nobody could understand the sufferings of just men who

[43] Sen., Ep. 107, 10. Cf. W. Ch. Greene, Moira (1944), p. 341; A–J. Festugière, La révelation d'Hermès Trismégiste II (1949), pp. 325–333.

[44] Finkelstein (n. 1) p. XIII. J. Bonsirven, Le Judaisme Palestinien II (1935), pp. 43–47.

[45] Sirach 2, 8.

died for God nor the prosperity of Belial's sons. But those who remembered Antigonus' word wondered no more at God's ways with His faithful servants, nor needed to doubt Him. In Antigonus' saying a perplexed generation recognized the perplexity of dispensation.

THE SO-CALLED 'BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID' IN THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL AND KINGS

A good deal of attention has centered of late on those sections of Samuel and Kings which are often said to constitute a biography of David. In particular, this 'biography' was recently singled out by Professor R. H. Pfeiffer, in his Presidential address [1] to the Society of Biblical Literature, as an example of the almost complete absence of religious motivation in the school of which it was representative: It showed history almost independent of religion, as the work of the Chronicler showed religion almost independent of history.

Now something like a biography of David — from whatever sources it may have been compounded — undoubtedly does run from I Samuel 16, where David is introduced, to II Samuel 5, where he is anointed king in Hebron. Throughout these chapters the story follows the sequence of events of David's life (though that sequence seems a bit muddled in places) and tells of other happenings, such as Saul's adventure at Endor or the defeat of Israel by the Philistines, only by the way, as explaining the changes of David's fortune. But with II Samuel 5.4 this regular biography is interrupted: The regnal formula characteristic of the editors of Kings appears, and the stories which follow in chapters 5–9 and 21–24 are abbreviated or disconnected or rewritten (if not original compositions of a much later period) and are so jumbled together that they can be called a 'biography' only by the sort of courtesy which would apply that term even to such miscellaneous anecdotes as the editors of Kings usually preserved about any one of their heroes. Whether any or all of this material ever was in Kings is here beside the point. The point is that the method, or lack of method, by which this material is arranged is the same as that used in Kings and is not, properly speaking, biographical.

On the other hand, chapters 10 to 20, inclusive, of II Samuel, and chapters 1 and 2 of I Kings, are again sustained narrative. The narrative has been touched up in places (in particular, the last words of David have been improved by a disciple of the Deuteronomist, in I Kings 2.1–4, and the editorial formula for disposing of dead kings appears in I Kings 2.10–11), but apart from such minor intrusions these chapters are obviously by a single hand. Their content, however, is not that of a biography. This is, perhaps, most clearly shown by quoting the sentences in which Pfeiffer, in his Introduction to the Old Testament,[2]

[1] Of Dec., 1950. Published in JBL 70 (1951) 1 ff. See esp. p. 5.
[2] N.Y., N.D. (1948), p. 358.

attempts to maintain the contrary. He says, 'The author's method is biographical. His story centers around the main characters, and national events are narrated in connection with personal history. . . . This method explains why the author neglects to speak of David's greatest achievement — the deliverance once and for all from the Philistines.' It is little short of a contradiction in terms to say that the use of the biographical method 'explains' the neglect to speak of the greatest achievement of the hero's life.

Actually, II Samuel 10–20 and I Kings 1–2 constitute, as they now stand, a moral tract. They tell how David sinned against the Lord by his adultery with Bathsheba and by his murder of Uriah; how the Lord rebuked him by Nathan and punished him first by the death of the child begotten in adultery, afterwards — as Nathan foretold [3] — by the revolt of Absalom and the public pollution of David's own concubines; how David bore this rebuke and punishment patiently; and how the Lord therefore rewarded him by sparing his life and by establishing — again through the instrumentality of Nathan — his second son from Bathsheba on his throne. All the events of David's later life told in these chapters are told because of their direct or indirect relevance to this moral message. The Ammonite war appears in II Sam. 10 as the *mise en scène* of the adultery and murder; the events leading up to Absalom's revolt and those of the revolt itself are told in full so as to demonstrate (and, partly, to explain) David's love for Absalom, which was an important element of the punishment.[4] There are several minor themes, it is true, but these are equally moral: Joab's murder of Amasa is avenged in the end, so is Shimei's sacrilege (his cursing of the divinely anointed king);[5] the faithfulness of Barzillai is rewarded,[6] and so on. The story of Adonijah's plot, in I Kings 1, serves to introduce the final punishment of the wicked Joab, no less than to show the final intervention of the prophet to enable David to keep the oath he had sworn by Jehovah and to seat the son of Bathsheba on his throne. Even the story of the revolt of Sheba ben Bichri (II Sam. 20), which might seem irrelevant material introduced because of its historical interest, is actually subordinated to the moral purpose: It explains the murder of Amasa, and so forms a necessary link in the preacher's story of crime and punishment.

Solomon — to judge from I Kings 2 — had evidently reached years

[3] II Sam. 12, esp. vss. 11–14.
[4] II Sam. 13.39; 16.1–11, 21–22; 18.5, 29, 32–19.1 &c.
[5] I Kings 2.32f. & 44; cp. II Sam. 19.19–22.
[6] II Sam. 17.27 ff.; 19.32–39; I Kings 2.7.

of considerable discretion by the time he began to reign: He may be supposed to have been about twenty. Now it is quite incredible that the last twenty years of David's rule should have contained no material of interest to a biographer save the revolt of Absalom (and the events connected with it) and the conspiracy of Adonijah. Therefore the choice of material in II Sam. 10–20 and I Kings 1–2 has been determined, not by the biographical interest which it does not show, but by the moral interest which it does. Therefore this section, at least, of the 'biography of David' is not properly a biography.

It should be added that this section is not free-standing: The story of Mephibosheth in II Samuel 16 and 19.25 ff. depends for its understanding on II Samuel 9 and on the story of David's friendship for Jonathan as told in I Samuel.[7] Joab's death avenges the murder of Abner no less than that of Amasa, but the murder of Abner appears in II Samuel 3.27. It may therefore be supposed either that some of the material in the present biographical section was originally part of such a moralizing account of David's life as we now have in the sections discussed above, or that the present moralizing account has been produced by late selection and (perhaps) adaptation of material from what was once a complete biography. It may well be that the material now available will leave the critic free to choose between these alternatives according to his personal preferences.

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[7] See esp. 20.42 and 23.18.

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